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# A Voice Crying in the Wilderness

THE MEMOIRS OF  
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UNIVERSITY PRESS OF MISSISSIPPI  
JACKSON

8.21

9-5-74

Univ. of College Press of Miss.

over a corduroy road that led to a ferry over the Pascagoula River. This spot was later named Prichard's Landing. The west end of the ferry was about three miles from Brewer's Bluff, the destination of Prichard's party.

Thomas Galloway, trader and turpentine operator, welcomed Prichard and his family to Brewer's Bluff. Galloway had settled there earlier, about 1847. Galloway had brought eight slaves from North Carolina, and he and his slaves built several houses. Two slave brothers, Abram and Henry Galloway, built and operated a turpentine distillery and later constructed the first sawmill to be located in the interior of Mississippi.<sup>2</sup> Galloway owned considerable land on the west side of the river and had houses ready for the Prichard family.

The village of Brewer's Bluff, thirty miles from the mouth of the Pascagoula, was fairly well established by the time Prichard arrived. In 1832 it became the first county seat of Jackson County. The town boasted a court house, a post office, a church, several stores, and a number of homes. In spite of the fact that in 1836 the post office was moved about eight miles east of the river to Americus, the Bluff, until after the Civil War, remained the most important settlement on the lower Pascagoula River.

The growth of Brewer's Bluff was due largely to the growth of river traffic on the Pascagoula between 1830 and 1850. Shipment of cotton from the north central counties was especially heavy during those years before railroads were built. The village was also located near the point where the "Old Wire Road" crossed the Pascagoula. This was the first wagon road between Mobile and New Orleans, as well as the route of the first telegraph line between these two towns. After the Civil War, the village lost its importance because of the development of railroads. By 1890, Brewer's Bluff was only a memory.

Abram and Henry Galloway, slaves to Thomas Galloway, were born in North Carolina, somewhere near the Virginia state line. As young slaves they gained considerable experience in the turpentine and naval stores industry. Records show that they not

<sup>2</sup> Cyril Edward Cain, *Four Centuries on the Pascagoula* (Mississippi, 1953), Vol. 1, p. 148.

They came on "3 chopped way".  
ended up at Ramsay Springs  
Then it was Harrison / Stone Co.



*How dear to this heart are the scenes of my childhood*  
SAMUEL WOODWORTH



CHAPTER VIII

## **The Village of Vancleave**

By the turn of the century, virtually all of the families had left John's Bayou for the new community of Vancleave. The homes of most of these families were clustered around the homestead of Henry Galloway, my grandfather. I estimate that twenty-four families—twelve white and twelve black—settled within a radius of two miles from the Galloway home. Approximately half of these families bought their home sites from him, and his home became the center of the community. The village supported six stores and a doctor, as well as two churches, one lodge hall, and one county school for the black families. Approximately fifty families lived within five miles of the village, and one hundred families received mail at the Vancleave post office.

Henry Galloway was respected by all of the people of the community. Nobody ever questioned the fact that he lived in one of the best frame houses in the village, although most of the older people had known him as a slave. Charity, his wife, was a midwife and nurse for both whites and blacks. Henry Galloway adored his wife, and even in his old age he would often say: "Charity is the sweetest woman in the world; I had to come all the way from North Carolina to meet her." She died in 1896 at eighty years of age. He lived for ten years after



During the springtime, the countryside was white with a profusion of dogwood blossoms. The hills looked like giant snowdrifts accented with splotches of redbud trees in full bloom. Wild flowers—violets, buttercups, wild azalea, honeysuckle, and magnolia—were abundant. As a boy, I walked along creeks where the fragrance of magnolia blossoms saturated the spring air. In the fall, ripe wild grapes were so abundant in the swamp trees that the air smelled like a winery.

Immediately after their emancipation a number of former slave families from the lower Pascagoula River area were attracted to the section around John's Bayou. The Fairleys, Caraways, Burneys, Reids, Chambers, Shaws, Taylors, and Bilbos made their homes there and found work in the growing turpentine, charcoal, and lumber industries which developed very fast after the Civil War.

The first stores were located at John's Bayou because it was near the Pascagoula River traffic and because Bluff Creek at this point provided an excellent spot for loading logs, timber, turpentine, and charcoal to be transported to the Gulf of Mexico. The early merchants usually owned the schooners which carried the forest products to New Orleans and brought back merchandise to be sold to the residents of the entire backwoods area. Two of the earliest merchants were William Martin and Willis Broadus.

Along with lumber, a new industry—the burning of charcoal—developed. In the years before the Civil War, it was impractical to ship stone coal to the gulf coast cities. Since neither artificial nor natural gas was available at that time, charcoal was used extensively for heating homes, cooking, and ironing. Well-charred charcoal could be burned with a minimum of smoke and ashes. Many families, both black and white, became charcoal producers.

Only ordinary equipment—axes, saws, shovels, a wagon, a yoke of oxen, or a pair of mules—was necessary for producing charcoal. The merchant usually furnished food and supplies, while the producer supplied the labor and transported the char-



the less said about it, the better. Although we would often ask him questions about slavery, he never talked freely about his slave experiences.

In 1873 Tom Galloway sold Grandpa Henry 160 acres of undeveloped land at Bluff Creek on the fork of Mounger's Creek. This land was beautifully located on a high ridge overlooking both creeks. The main county wagon road to Ocean Springs ran through this tract of land at a bridge across Bluff Creek. Grandpa Henry arranged to get lumber from Tom Galloway to build a home for his family, and he encouraged his sons and relatives to homestead land.

About 1874, Tom Galloway decided to sell his sawmill and move his distillery to a new location. I believe there was an understanding between Tom Galloway and Henry that Henry would no longer work for Galloway after he relocated his business operations. In closing out his business at Brewer's Bluff, Tom gave Uncle Abe two hundred acres of land near the site of the old distillery. Uncle Abe lived there until his death thirty years later.

When Jacob Brown landed his raft at Poticaw Landing, after his notable trip down the river, acquaintances and friends were there with an ox wagon to take his belongings to the John's Bayou community. The merchants and citizens were happy to have a good carpenter and blacksmith in the settlement, and Jacob and his sons experienced no difficulty in finding work. The family had no trouble finding a cabin, and they were happy in the new community.

Elbertis quickly learned how to burn charcoal, and the whole family engaged in this enterprise from which they were able to make a living. Brown did carpentry and blacksmith work and occasionally rafted logs to Moss Point. Steamboat traffic between Moss Point and Scranton flourished, as both towns were developing into important lumber and shipping centers.

In 1878, the Louisville and Nashville Railroad was completed along the Gulf Coast from Mobile to New Orleans. The name of Scranton was changed to Pascagoula, and the entire Gulf Coast took on new growth. The country road from the backwoods



was developed from the Bluff Creek community to Ocean Springs and Biloxi.

Since John's Bayou was located between two rivers, it was not practical for the main county wagon road to pass through this settlement. The graded county road constructed through the western side of Jackson County crossed Bluff Creek at a bridge near Mounger's Creek. As river traffic on the Pascagoula began to diminish, settlers at John's Bayou moved nearer the wagon road. White and black settlers bought land clustered around Henry Galloway's homestead, since it was on the wagon road at the bridge. By 1885, virtually all of the stores and homes had been relocated from John's Bayou to the Bluff Creek community. The new community was called Vancleave.

Soon after my grandfather moved to Bluff Creek, other pioneer ex-slaves—the Ben Caraway family—homesteaded on the opposite side of the creek. These two families were followed by the Fairleys, the Burneys, the Chambers, the Shaws, the Reids, the Reddixes, and the Taylors, among others.

Adrian Vancleave, a Confederate veteran who came from Hinds County to Ocean Springs in 1867, was the first merchant to open a store in the Bluff Creek area. The village of Vancleave was named for him. The first post office known as Bluff Creek had been opened in 1869, with Andrew W. Ramsay as postmaster. The first post office known as Vancleave was opened in 1870, and Hector Fairley, an ex-slave acted as postmaster.

Willis Brodus and William Martin had moved their stores from John's Bayou to the new community of Bluff Creek in the early part of the 1870s. Between 1870 and 1880, a number of merchants—George Davis, Andrew W. Ramsay, Thomas C. Ruble, Harry Woodman, Amiziah Breland and several others—moved into the general area of Vancleave and opened stores. They made no effort, however, to concentrate their stores in a distinct village. Some of the stores were miles apart.

I have already mentioned that in 1873 my stepgrandfather, Henry Galloway, bought from his former owner, 160 acres of land which lay between Mounger's Creek and Bluff Creek, including practically all of the land where the original village



The Louisville and Nashville Railroad from Mobile to New Orleans was completed in 1872. The nearest stop to Vancleave was Fountainbleau. The town of Ocean Springs was twelve miles from Vancleave. The wagon road to Ocean Springs was improved around 1873, and a bridge was constructed on Bluff Creek near Henry Galloway's homestead. This improvement gave Vancleave access to the railroad for shipping and mail service to Ocean Springs and Biloxi.

Prior to this time, Vancleave had been an isolated and backward settlement. Although it was less than fifteen miles from Biloxi, one of the oldest cities in the United States, the village of Vancleave was one of the most primitive in the state. The road was further improved about 1912, but river traffic was virtually non-existent after that year.

Around 1901, the Dantzler Lumber Company of Moss Point built a standard gauge railroad from Vancleave some twenty-five miles into the interior to transport logs and timber from thousands of acres of backwoods timberland owned by the company. The logs were hauled by rail to Vancleave and then rafted down Bluff Creek to the mills in Moss Point. After a severe hurricane in 1906 blew down most of the standing timber in the backwoods, the Dantzler Company constructed a sawmill at Vancleave to cut this timber; it then shipped the lumber directly to market by barges and ships. Although the lumber industry brought money and work into the Vancleave community, it also brought vice, crime, and poor race relations.

The first public school in the area, known as the Vancleave Public School, was opened for white children in 1880. Two years later, the first school for black children was opened. It was known as the Bluff Creek Public School in order to distinguish it from the school for white children. At the time, considerable discussion and controversy arose regarding "separate but equal" public schools for the races. The Vancleave Public School and the Bluff Creek Public School were basically as separate but equal as they could physically be. Both were one-room schools with little or no furniture and equipment, and both teachers received a salary of \$50 per month.